



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE
STATEMENT

Opening Statement of Rep. Ben Cline (R-VA)
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections Hearing:
**“Balancing Work, Health, and Family: The Case for Expanding the Family and
Medical Leave Act”**
February 11, 2020

(As prepared for delivery)

“Balancing a career and a family can be a challenge for many workers, especially when life-altering events, like the birth or adoption of a new child, or a serious illness occur. Allowing workers to take time away from their jobs during these moments ensures that these employees can remain in the workforce.

"Committee Republicans recognize the benefits provided by the *Family and Medical Leave Act* (FMLA), which requires employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected family and medical leave to eligible employees.

"Furthermore, Republicans in Congress have encouraged workplace flexibility and support for working families through the paid family and medical leave tax credit, which rewards businesses that provide paid leave benefits, and allowing new parents to borrow from their private retirement account following the birth or adoption of a child, free from penalty.

"While the FMLA has helped many workers balance work and family, there are an ever-growing number of employer-provided options that Congress should continue to recognize.

"In fact, many businesses already provide robust leave options for their employees to help ensure a positive and productive workplace. Family-friendly policies have become an important tool for companies to attract and retain quality employees in our competitive job market.

"According to the Society for Human Resource Management, the percentage of firms offering paid maternity leave nearly tripled between 2014 and 2018. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that 66 percent of wage and salary workers had access to paid leave in 2018—up from 60 percent in 2011.

"Companies know they need to understand their current and prospective employees' workplace concerns and be prepared to address them. Congress should allow our nation's employers the flexibility to develop and offer personalized solutions that work best for their employees and themselves.

"As this Committee examines the issue of family and medical leave, we should avoid implementing one-size-fits all solutions, and instead focus on how we can foster an environment that encourages employers to meet the needs of their workers.

"Take the *Tax Cuts and Jobs Act* for example. The 2017 pro-growth, pro-worker, tax reform passed by Republicans and signed into law by President Trump included a tax credit for employers who voluntarily offer at least two weeks of paid family and medical leave to their employees, which is set to expire at the end of this year. This allows employers to claim a tax credit for up to 25 percent of the amount of wages paid to qualified employees taking between two and 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave.

"Another Republican led initiative, H.R. 5656, the *Working Families Flexibility Act*, amends the *Fair Labor Standards Act* to allow private-sector employers to offer their employees the choice of paid or comp time in lieu of cash wages for working overtime. This provides hourly workers the choice to access additional paid leave options not currently available to them. The *Working Families Flexibility Act* passed the House in the 115th Congress.

"These initiatives help create solutions for working individuals and families without burdening the American taxpayer and without creating new burdens on employers. Unfortunately, many of the Democrats' initiatives we'll hear about today have a different approach, with overarching government involvement and a hefty price tag for workers and employers.

"Bottom line, Congress should avoid burdening the American taxpayer and employers through additional Washington-knows-best, federal mandates when

the private sector is already innovating solutions that create workplace flexibility for employees.

"I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how the federal government can continue encouraging employers to develop solutions that meet the needs of workers and their families."

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